

Group Therapy

by patientalien

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Summary: After the events of "Bad Water", Lucas, Kristin, Ben, and Ford are ordered into therapy.

Group Therapy

To AT Jackson.

> <p>

> Dr. Taylor regarded the four people in front of her, and smiled. "Hello," she said, keeping her voice friendly and non-threatening. Captain Bridger had told her these people had just been through a harrowing experience and were probably a little jumpy. Funny, she thought, they didn't look jumpy. Or disturbed by the experience at all. In fact, they looked quite relaxed, if not a bit annoyed. "I was called here by your captain to help you work through what happened last week during the rescue attempt of the sightseeing submarine." The blonde kid across from her rolled his eyes and tilted his chair back. "Would anyone like to start? Just... anything you want."

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> The blonde kid suddenly grinned lopsidedly and put his chair back fully on the ground. "Anything?" he asked, suspiciously. Taylor glanced at her clipboard with the information on the group. This must be Lucas Wolenczak. She nodded.

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> "Anything," she repeated.

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> "I'm Batman," Lucas said, standing up and putting his hands on his hips, striking a very heroic-looking posture. The man sitting beside him started to snicker, and Taylor wondered what she had gotten herself into.

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> Kristin Westphalen groaned and put her head in her hands. She KNEW Lucas couldn't be trusted to keep serious during this process. She KNEW this was a bad idea from the start, bringing the teen along.

Lucas had been greatly opposed to the idea to begin with, which should have been a big clue that he would do something like this.

"You are NOT Batman," she said sharply. "Now sit down and behave!"

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> Lucas winked at her and sat on Ben Krieg's lap. "I'm dead sexy!" crooned Ben, stroking Lucas' blonde hair.

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> Oh dear, Kristin thought. They were plotting together. She should have known. Lucas and Ben were never able to be together in the same room without some sort of havoc breaking out. Kristin glanced over at Commander Ford, who was covering his mouth, trying very hard to look Commander-like and serious. At least one of them was trying to take this seriously, Kristin decided.

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> "Only the best for Batman," Lucas replied, resting his chin on the top of Ben's head. Kristin took a deep breath and counted to ten. As it turned out, ten was not nearly enough.

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> Lucas bit the insides of his cheeks to keep from busting out laughing. THIS would show Dr. Westphalen that he was not forced to be taken lightly when pressured into therapy. "I like flowers," he said innocently, still leaning on Ben's head. The last time he had been forced into therapy, he had used a similar act and nearly driven the intern who had been working with the psychiatrist to quit. With any luck, and with Ben's help, the same thing would happen today.

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> "Umm... well, that's... good, Lucas," Dr. Taylor stammered, looking to Dr. Westphalen, her eyebrows raised. Dr. Westphalen simply shrugged and shook her head as if saying 'I just live with them. I don't explain them.'

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> Ben Krieg looked to Lucas in inquiry. Lucas, with an amused smirk on his face, nodded. Ben took a moment to prepare himself, then jumped out of his chair, sending Lucas sprawling onto the floor. "Oh my LORD!!" he shouted, pointing across the room.

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> "What?" Commander Ford asked, concerned. Ben looked up at Kristin to gauge her reaction. She was sitting very still in her chair, trying not to look at him or Lucas... and at the moment it was clear she was none too happy with Ford either.

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> Ben swallowed his laughter and shouted: "The WATER BUFFALO are coming!!!" Lucas jumped to his feet and stared urgently in the same direction as Ben was pointing. "Don't you see them, Batman?" he asked, putting a hand on Lucas' shoulder.

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> Lucas looked at him, then back at where the "water buffalo" were congregating. "Of course I do," he replied solemnly. "Batman sees all. Knows all. Has cheese in his foot."

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> Ben bit his lip to keep from snickering. Well, he thought, that was random... but randomness, Lucas had said, was key to this little game. A game which Ben was more than happy to play.

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> "Cheese?" Dr. Taylor asked incredulously, writing furiously in her notebook.

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> Ben wondered what she was writing - and what she was diagnosing them both as having. It would be interesting if they ever were to find out.

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> "You do NOT have cheese in your foot, you are NOT Batman, and there are NO water buffaloes anywhere near here!" Kristin exclaimed, throwing up her hands in frustration.
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> Lucas sat back down in his chair, crossed his arms over his chest, and proceeded to pout. "I do SO have cheese in my foot," he replied sulkily. "It likes a warm climate. Swiss is the most likely to inhabit feet. I think it escaped from my shoe."
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> Ben nodded knowingly. "I had Swiss in my foot once," he said nostalgically. He sat on the floor beside Lucas' chair and leaned against it. He had been warned by Lucas that he would just have to play along sometimes...
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> "Really?" Lucas asked curiously. "What did you do about it?"
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> Ben found it absolutely amazing that Lucas showed no signs of hiding laughter, or of being amused at all. He seemed genuinely serious about the whole business, though he had been laughing hysterically when they made the plan. The teen was an accomplished actor, Ben decided.
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> "I held a spray can in front of my foot and said the Pledge of Allegiance four times," Ben said, thinking of the most random things he could. This was more difficult than Lucas made it out to be. But he could tell it was working. Taylor was looking increasingly nervous, and Kristin was ready to strangle them all. Ford seemed interestingly neutral, neither surprised nor angry. Well, that was Ford for you.
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> "What about antelope?" Lucas asked, looking down at Ben. "I have a terrible antelope problem."
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> "What you do," Ben explained, "is you play any Stephen Sondheim musical and birds will come down and poke out their eyeballs. Then they'll leave you alone." Wow, he thought. Where did _that_ come from?
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> "Even Sweeny Todd?" Lucas asked.
>
> "_Especially_ Sweeny Todd."
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> Suddenly Ben got very nervous. Sweeny Todd, or what he had seen of it when Tim had forced them all to watch it, wasn't something he'd expect Lucas to make a vague reference too... Chopping people up for meat pies wasn't something Ben could picture the teen being interested in. He wasn't quite sure WHY he was nervous... ah well, ya never can tell, he thought to himself.
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> Jonathan Ford watched the duo's antics, waiting for a lapse in their exchange so he could jump in with his own little psychosis. He had to admit, he had his doubts when Lucas first brought the idea to him. But then he realized that he wasn't too keen on sitting around discussing his feelings either. Besides, Lucas could be persuasive when he wanted to be.
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> After Lucas' Sweeny Todd remark, there was a short silence, broken by Taylor clearing her throat. "Well.... I'm sure you two will...erm... find many...solutions to those... and other...

problems, but could we get back to the task at hand?" Ford suppressed a smile. Taylor looked like she was scared out of her wits and wanted nothing more than to go back to her safe little practice, wherever that may be. "Commander Ford," Taylor said, nodding at him. "Why don't you tell us what was going through your mind when you were in the hurricane?"

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> Bingo, Ford thought. This was the perfect set up. "All right, doctor," he said, keeping his tone even. "Well, at first I thought it was a set-up. Because, after all, I'm the one who makes the hurricanes and I don't remember giving that power to anyone else." He paused, gauging the reactions of those around him. Lucas and Ben were hiding grins, and Doctor Westphalen looked ready to strangle someone. Taylor was simply scared. "But then I recalled I had set one up for that day at that exact time. How was I to know the Devil was working that day? He doesn't send me his schedule anymore."

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> Taylor's mouth opened slightly in surprise and confusion. "And why wouldn't he?" she asked, taking copious amounts of notes.

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> "He and I had a little... falling out," Ford replied neutrally. "He's trying to convert Batman here, and he's already gotten Krieg. Who knows what's next?"

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> "THAT'S who sent the water buffalo!" Lucas exclaimed, snapping his fingers. "It's all becoming clear now..." He paused, took a small tape recorder out of the pocket of his jeans, and pressed the play button. After a moment of fiddling with the volume control, he began to sing along with the music.

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> "What if God was one of us.... just a slob like one of us..."

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> Ford bit the insides of his cheeks to keep from laughing. Not only was the performance highly appropriate for Ford's idea, but Lucas' singing left quite a bit to be desired. Now Ford knew why the teen had gone into computers and not performing arts.

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> "That's ENOUGH," Westphalen hissed from her seat. Lucas' face fell and he shut off the tape recorder, sitting back down. "THANK you. Now can we continue?"

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> Taylor nodded enthusiastically. "Doctor Westphalen, what are your feelings on the matter?"

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> Kristin shrugged. "I was afraid. I wasn't sure if we'd get out of this alive, and I wasn't sure how these three were holding up -especially Lucas." Well, she may as well get the full benefit of the two hundred and fifty dollar and hour therapy.

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> "And how did you feel, Lucas?" Taylor asked, dreading the answer.

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> Lucas, surprisingly, stayed seated. "How do you think I felt?" he asked seriously. "Surprised, bewildered, betrayed. Besides, I was worried that they'd find out my true identity. You see, the wireless microphones I have to carry around can't be exposed to water for too long a time."

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> Kristin's head dropped into her hands and she sighed deeply. If ONLY she hadn't gone along with the captain's suggestion. If ONLY she hadn't forced Lucas along... She shook her head in distress, and

prayed the hour was nearly over.

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> "Hiddenâ€|microphonesâ€|.?" Taylor asked, looking incredulously at the teen and continuing to take notes. "Mr. Wolenczak, I think thatâ€|" she paused, Lucas looking at her in eager anticipation of what she might say. "Have you ever had a professional psych evaluation?"

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> "You mean the ones with the ink blots that look like dead fish?" Lucas asked innocently. "They gave me one of those once. Then they sent me here." He slid across the floor so he was sitting on the floor beside Kristin's chair. "If they knew I was Batman, they wouldn't have." He batted his eyelashes at Kristin, who simply scowled at him.

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> Kristin was beginning to get very upset. No, correction: she was already very upset. Now it was simply getting worse and she was trying her best not to lose her temper. Even Commander Ford - Commander Ford!! - was involved in this charade. Why couldn't they just play it straight for once and not feel the need to make a big joke out of everything. Kristin herself hadn't been looking forward to this experience, but Captain Bridger had said it might be helpful, and Kristin had gone along with it. Had she known THIS was going to happenâ€| "For the last time," Kristin said, putting a hand on Lucas' shoulder. "You are NOT Batman."

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> "Am so," Lucas shot back, visibly and audibly pouting.

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> "No, you're not," Kristin replied.

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> "Am so."

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> "Are not."

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> "Am so."

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> "Are not. Oh for --" Kristin sighed, not believing she'd been roped into acting childish along with the rest of them. "Fine," she said, finally. "You're Batman."

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> Lucas grinned up at her, and Kristin curbed the temptation to strangle the teen. "See, told you," Lucas said in a sing-song voice. "I told you I was Batman - see!" he said to Dr. Taylor. "See, even she says so."

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> Kristin closed her eyes and counted to ten once again. Fine. If this was what they were waiting for, they would get it. "You must understand," she said. "It's the water." She paused. "It's got demons in it." She shook her head. Why on earth was she playing along? Because it was kind of funny, she decided.

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> "Demonsâ€|" Taylor repeated.

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> Kristin nodded. "Demons," she said. "Like the Commander said, they're trying to infest us." She sighed again - why was she going along with this?

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> "Oh?" Taylor asked, wide-eyed.

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> "Why, absolutely," Kristin replied. "You see, they cling onto cells

in the brain and cause minor psychosis. Not that anyone noticed when Lucas and Krieg started acting oddâ€¦ Lucas has been insisting he's Batman for the entire tour now. And Kriegâ€¦ wellâ€¦ we all know about Krieg."

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> "Iâ€¦ seeâ€¦" Taylor managed.

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> Kristin looked over at Lucas and Ben, who were simply staring at her, wide-eyed at her. She smiled to herself; even Commander Ford looked a little shocked. No, they hadn't expected that, had they? Thought they could pull one over on her and have her not get involved. Oh no, when you played games around Kristin Westphalen, you should very well expect to have her start playing too.

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> "So you are certain your crewmates are possessed by demons?" Taylor asked carefully, gathering her things into a small pile beside her chair and nonchalantly placing them in her briefcase.

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> "Oh quite certain," Kristin said, standing, and walking over to Lucas. "Why, just yesterday this young man claimed he was going to begin a rock band - to play the Devil's music."

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> Lucas looked curiously at her. Certainly Kristin wasn't playing along with this. Certainly Lucas couldn't be expected to go along with his original plan with Kristin doing this too... or maybe it would speed up the process.

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> "Heard of Marilyn Manson?" Lucas asked. "Ozzy Osbourne? Alice Cooper? Rob Zombie?" Taylor nodded, very, very hesitantly. She did not want to know where this was going. She simply wanted to get off of this sub as soon as possible. "They're nothing compared to Yellow Daffodils. You should see our act - it's got... well... it's got me. And I've got this... this... well, you have to see it to understand but, man, we are gothic to the max."

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> "And the name of your band is Yellow Daffodils?" Ford asked from where he had remained seated. He had an amused smirk on his face, and Lucas knew that this was involved as Ford was going to get. "You do realize my deal with the Devil requires him to do a demonic possession of all musicians with pansy band names claiming to be goth rockers."

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> "I already have an appointment for one of those," Lucas replied, without missing a beat. He paused for a moment. "Do they hurt?"

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> Ford shrugged. "Only the spinning head part," he said. "Though I've never actually had one. I've just witnessed."

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> At this moment, Kristin spoke up. "I did an exorcism once," she said. "And trust me, Batman, it won't hurt a bit. Scare any on-lookers a great deal, but it won't hurt."

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> Lucas smiled at Dr. Taylor, who nervously returned the gesture. "Have you ever seen a possession?" Lucas asked innocently. "Because if you want to stay, mine is right after this."

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> "Ah..I... er... no...thank...you," Taylor sputtered, shoving her notebook into her briefcase. "I think... I'd best... be going - you seem to... have adjusted...fine to your...experience...I... will just speak... with your captain...." She stood quickly, and the four

watched quietly as the doctor left the room.

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> "Captain Bridger," Dr. Taylor said promptly, walking into his office. She did not bother knocking or waiting his acknowledgment of her presence, rather she sat down in the chair in front of his desk and handed her the notebook she had been using for the session with those... people... "It is of my medical opinion that your commander, supply officer, and chief medical officer are unfit for duty and should be given complete psychiatric evaluations." Her voice held a note of superiority. She was the doctor, he was not. She would have some control over this situation; control she had not had during the session.

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> Nathan Bridger raised an eyebrow. "Oh?" he asked, challengingly. "And Lucas?" he added, noting that Taylor had left the teenager out of her "medical opinion" of the rest of the crew. He could only imagine her take on Lucas. After all, the teen always carried out his orders to the tee and Bridger had been quite specific in the most current set of orders.

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> Taylor shuddered and let out her breath sharply. "While he doesn't seem particularly dangerous, you might want to consider re-thinking his position on this vessel. A person with the psychosis I am observing in him should not be allowed to be in charge of all of the ship's computers." At this point, Bridger began to chuckle. Oh, Lucas had done his job and done it well - that much was very clear. Now it was Bridger's turn.

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> "Are you saying my crew is not capable of handling their positions? The ones I hand-picked them for? They were like that before the hurricane, they were like that after the hurricane, and I don't want anyone to try and change that." Bridger tried to make himself sound as important and authoritative as possible, trying very hard not to crack up laughing.

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> "But you asked me --" Taylor began, her tone one of confusion.

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> Bridger cut her off. "Now if you'll excuse me, I have to finish waxing my penguins, so I'll have Ortiz get you out on the next launch."

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> Taylor opened her mouth, and closed it again in complete and utter confusion. In all of her years as a psychiatrist, never had she seen anything like this. Never. And if she had anything to say about it, she never would again. "Well, thank you for your time, Captain," she said, with a strained politeness. "I'd better go." And she was out of the room as fast as she could, leaving the yellow-papered notebook on Bridger's desk.

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> "Lucas Wolenczak, I do not BELIEVE your behavior. All of you, I'm VERY disappointed in," Kristin lectured, standing in front of the three men and pacing back and forth, hands on her hips.

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> "You played too, Doc," Lucas reminded her, with a lopsided grin. "Besides," he continued, "it wasn't my idea." He waited for enough time for a moderate amount of suspense to build. "Captain Bridger

actually made the suggestion. I thought it would be fun. So did Ben. So did the commander." Ben and Ford nodded sheepishly at Lucas' confession.

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> "Oh, really?" Kristin asked. "Well he and I are going to have a very long talk very soon." She walked over to Lucas, and put a hand on his shoulder. She leaned over and whispered: "Thank you - I actually had fun. Shhh... don't tell." Lucas snickered, and bit his lip to keep from laughing outright.

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> "Okay! Enough! Back to what you're supposed to be doing! Go!" Kristin exclaimed, pointing to the door. "We'll discuss it later. Go." Slowly, reluctantly, the three men obeyed, Lucas turning at the door and giving Kristin a warm smile.

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> "Thanks, Doc," Lucas said, and left the room.

End
file.